

Instead of classifying the web sites as the jurisdictional end of the communication, the FCC has specifically classified the ISP as an end user. See, e.g., Third Report and Order ¶ 288. Given the absence of an FCC ruling on the subject, this court finds it appropriate to defer to the ICC's finding of industry practice regarding call termination. Indeed, the Internet Agreements themselves authorize the Commission to determine when a call qualifies as "local."¹²

The ICC's decision included the following finding of fact regarding call termination:

[W]e are persuaded by Mr. Harris' explanation of industry practice with respect to call termination. He testified that call termination within the public switched network "occurs when a call connection is established between the caller and the telephone exchange service to which the dialed telephone number is assigned . . ."

(Order at 11.) This definition of "termination"¹³ is crucial to understanding the meaning of the Agreements, as the Agreements specifically use the word termination in defining reciprocal compensation. When a customer of a LEC dials the ISP's local, seven-digit number, the customer

¹² TCG's Agreement provides that "local traffic" is "local service area calls as defined by the Commission." (TCG § 1.43.) The Agreements of the other Carrier defendants provide that a "local call" is:

a call which is fifteen (15) miles or less as calculated by using the V&H coordinates of the originating NXX and the V & H coordinates of the terminating NXX, or as otherwise determined by the FCC or Commission for purposes of Reciprocal Compensation; provided that in no event shall a Local Traffic call be less than fifteen (15) miles as so calculated.

(MFS § 1.38; MCI § 1.2; AT&T § 1.2; Focal § 1.46.) (emphasis added).

¹³ The ICC's definition of "termination" closely follows that adopted by the ICC. See, e.g., Implementation of the Local Competition Provisions in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, CC Docket No. 96-98, First Report and Order, ¶ 1040 (Aug. 8, 1996) ("We define 'termination,' for purposes of section 251(b)(5) [the reciprocal compensation provision of the Telecommunications Act], as the switching of traffic that is subject to section 251(b)(5) at the terminating carrier's end office switch (or equivalent facility) and delivery of that traffic from that switch to the called party's premises.").

is connected to the ISP. Once this "call connection" is established between the caller and the telephone exchange service of the seven-digit number, the call is deemed "terminated" for purposes of the Agreements. The fact that the ISP then connects the user to the Internet, where the user may access unlimited web sites, does not alter the fact that the call has been "terminated" at the ISP for purposes of reciprocal compensation.

J. THE ICC ORDER VIOLATES SECTION 251(G) OF THE ACT

Ameritech's final argument is that the ICC's order violates Section 251(g) of the Telecommunications Act. Pursuant to Section 251(g),

On or after February 8, 1996, each local exchange carrier, to the extent that it provides wireline services, shall provide exchange access, information access, and exchange services for such access to interexchange carriers and information service providers in accordance with the same equal access and nondiscriminatory interconnection restrictions and obligations (including receipt of compensation) that apply to such carrier on the date immediately preceding February 8, 1996 under any court order, consent decree, or regulation, order, or policy of the Commission, until such restrictions and obligations are explicitly superseded by regulations prescribed by the Commission after February 8, 1996. During the period beginning on February 8, 1996 and until such restrictions and obligations are so superseded, such restrictions and obligations shall be enforceable in the same manner as regulations of the Commission.

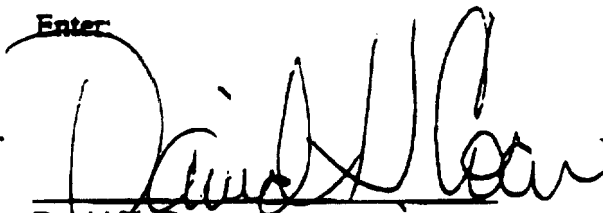
According to Ameritech, because no court order, consent decree, regulation, order, or policy of the FCC provided for the payment of reciprocal compensation prior to February 7, 1996, reciprocal compensation cannot now apply. Ameritech states that reciprocal compensation could only apply if the FCC were to explicitly so require by regulation. Such an argument is circular, and escapes the logic of this opinion. Section 251(g) merely provides that local exchange carriers must provide services with the same "equal access and nondiscriminatory interconnection restrictions and obligations" as prior to the passage of the Telecommunications Act, until such restrictions or

obligations are superseded. As this court has found that the FCC has no prior ruling that controls in the instant case, there is no ruling that could possibly be violated by ordering continued payments of reciprocal compensation by the plaintiff. Furthermore, as the defendants point out, Ameritech did indeed pay reciprocal compensation for local calls prior to the passage of the Act.

IV. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated in this Memorandum Opinion and Order, this court affirms the Commission's determination that Local Exchange Carriers are entitled to reciprocal compensation under the Interconnection Agreements for Internet calls. The stay of the Commission's order is continued for an additional thirty-five (35) days to allow the parties to appeal.

Enter

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David H. Coar", written over a horizontal line.

David H. Coar,
United States District Judge

Dated: July 21, 1998

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Michael W. Fleming, hereby certify that on September 18, 1998 a copy of the foregoing "OPPOSITION TO DIRECT CASES OF FOCAL COMMUNICATIONS, INC." was sent by First Class United States Mail, postage prepaid. to the following:

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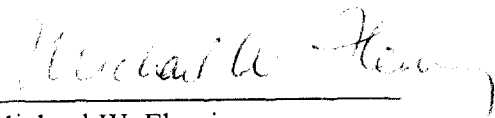
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